Inverness. 7th. August 1818.

Papers relative to Tour in III

My dear Sir,

What shall I write about? I am resolved to send you a letter, but where is the subject? I have already stumped away on my ten toes 642 miles, and seen many fine sights, but I am puzzled to know what to make choice of. Suppose I begin with myself, – there must be a pleasure in that, – and, by way of variety, I must bring in Mr. Keats. Then, be it known, in the first place, we are in as continued a bustle as an old Dowager at Home. Always moving – moving from one place to another, like Dante's inhabitants of the Sulphur Kingdom in search of cold ground, – poring over the Map, – calculating distances, – packing up Knapsacks, – and paying bills. There's so much for yourself, my dear. "Thank'ye, Sir." How many miles to the next Town? "Seventeen lucky miles, Sir." That must be at least twenty; come along, Keats; here's your stick; why, we forgot the map! – now for it; seventeen lucky miles! I must have another hole taken up in the strap of my Knapsack. Oh, the misery of coming to the meeting of three roads without a finger post! There's an old woman coming, – God bless her! she'll tell us all about it. Eh! she can't speak English! Repeat the name of the town over in all ways, but the true spelling way, and possibly she may understand. No, we've not got the brogue. Then toss up heads or tails for right and left, and fortune send us the right road! Here's a soaking shower coming! cod! it rolls between the mountains as if it would drown us. At last we come wet and weary to the long wished for Inn. What have you for Dinner? "Truly nothing." No Eggs? "We have two." Any loaf bread? "No, Sir, but we've nice oat-cakes." Any bacon? any dried fish? "No, no, no, Sir!" But you've plenty of Whiskey? "O yes, Sir, plenty of Whiskey!" This is melancholy. Why should so beautiful a Country be poor? Why can't craggy mountains, and ~~or~~ granite rocks, bear corn, wine, and oil? These are our misfortunes, – these are what make me "an Eagle's talon in the waist". But I am well repaid for my sufferings. We came out to endure, and to be gratified with scenery, and lo! we have not been disappointed either way. As for the Oat-cakes, I was once in despair about them. I was not only too dainty, but they absolutely make me sick. With a little gulping, I can manage them now. Mr. Keats however is too unwell for fatigue and privation. I am waiting here to see him off in the Smack for London. He caught a violent cold in the Island of Mull, which has

from leaving him, has become worse, and the Physician here thinks him too thin and fevered to proceed on our journey. It is a cruel disappointment. We have been as happy as possible together. Alas! I shall have to travel thro' Perthshire and all the Counties round in solitude! But my disappointment is nothing to his; he not only loses my company, (and that's a real loss,) but he loses the Country. Poor Charles Brown will have to trudge by himself, — an odd fellow, and moreover ~~an~~ an odd figure; — imagine me with a thick stick in my hand, the knapsack on my back, "with spectacles on nose," a white hat, a tartan coat and trowsers, and a Highland plaid thrown over my shoulders! Don't laugh at me, there's a good fellow, — altho' Mr. Keats calls me the Red Cross Knight, and declares my own shadow is ready to split its sides as it follows me. This dress is the best possible dress, as Dr. Pangloss would say. It is light and not easily penetrated by the wet, and when it is, it is not cold, — it has little more than a kind of heavy smoky sensation about it. I must not think of the wind, and the sun, and the rain, after my journey thro' the island of Mull. There's a wild place! Thirty seven miles of jumping and flinging over great stones along no path at all, up the steep and down the steep, and wading thro' rivulets up to the knees, and creeping a bog, a mile long, up to the ancles. I should like to give you a whole and particular account of the many — many wonderful places I have visited, — but why should I ask a man to pay vigentiple postage? In one word then, — that is to the end of the letter, — let me tell you I have seen one half of the Lakes in Westmoreland & Cumberland, — I have travelled over the whole of the coast of Kirk=cudbrightshire, and skudded over to Donaghadee. But I did not like Ireland, — at least that part, — and would go no farther than Belfast. So back came I in a whirligig, that is in a hurry, — and trotted up to Ayr; where I had the happiness of drinking Whiskey in the very house that Robin Burns was born, — and I saw the banks of bonny Doon, — and the brigs of Ayr, — and Kirk Alloway, — I saw it all! After this we went to Glasgow, & then to Loch Lomond, — but you can read all about that place in one of the fashionable guide-books. Then to Loch Awe and down to the foot of it, — oh, what a glen we went thro' to get at it! At the top of the glen my Itinerary mentioned a place called "Rest and be thankful" nine miles off; now we had set out without breakfast, intending to take our meal there, when, horror and starvation! "Rest and be thankful" was not an Inn, but a stone seat!